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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the problem of the decline in the available pool of black students in colleges and universities who are choosing teaching as a career. At a time when black students are most in need of good role models and the greatest academic support, black teachers are becoming scarce in the public schools. Three possible reasons for this situation are: the Preprofessional Skills Test and the National Teacher Examination often discourage black students; ineffective recruitment techniques are used by colleges and universities; and the entry-level salary is low. A two-part strategic plan for increasing the number of black students in teacher education programs is outlined. The plan involves action on the community level (church, community, and public schools) and on the college and university level. (JD)

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RESTRUCTURING TEACHER EDUCATION: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF BLACK STUDENTS IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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RESTRUCTURING TEACHER EDUCATION: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF BLACK STUDENTS IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Though there are alternative certification programs in some of our states, the job of developing or producing teachers is still basically the responsibility of colleges and universities. This, of course, means that if certain racial or ethnic groups are not represented or under-represented in teacher education programs, the college or university leadership has some responsibility in resolving the problem. Thus, since Black teachers have become a scarce commodity, colleges and universities must find ways to produce more Black teachers.

Black participation in college life peaked about the mid-1970's. For instance, Wilson (1988) reported that most demographic indicators identify 1976 as the approximate peak year of Black participation in all levels of higher education. With a 25% increase in high school graduation rate, from 1976 to 1982, Blacks declined 11% in participation in undergraduate education, Wilson and Melendex (1985). Blacks must go to college to have a chance at becoming a teacher. Will there be Black teachers available to teach in America's schools by the year 2000? This is a question that should be answered with the certainty of assuring the survival of the Black teacher. However, with a continuous decline in enrollment of Black students in teacher preparation programs, it appears, unless the above mentioned question is addressed with positive actions, this group of teachers will eventually become extinct. It should also be noted that the declining enrollment of Black

students in teacher preparation programs is occurring at a time when Black student enrollment in urban elementary and secondary schools is increasing. To have real hope for a successful life or career many of these students will need to see themselves in the individuals who are leading in the schools and classrooms.

There are many questions to be asked in regard to why there is a decline in the number of Black students in teacher education programs. Some of these questions are as follows:

1. Is it that Black students feel other professions provide more upward mobility than teaching?
2. Is it that Black students do not see as many role models in upper level professional education jobs as they once did?
3. Is it that entry level teaching salaries are too low to attract Black students to a teaching major?
4. Is it a lack of or ineffective recruitment techniques by teacher education colleges to interest Black students in teaching?
5. Is it that the fear of passing the PPST and the NTE serve to discourage Black students from entering teacher education?
6. Is it that a decline in Blacks going to college has decreased the pool to have large numbers of Black students to go into teaching?

Available Pool

It appears the available pool of Black students in colleges and universities have declined over the past 10 years. In 1976, 33.5% of Black high school graduates between the ages of 18 and 24 were enrolled in college; this percentage was comparable to that for White high school graduates, Graham (1987). By 1983, according to Graham, only 27% of Black high school graduates in that age group were enrolled in college. The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986) also reported that the number of Blacks entering four-year colleges is decreasing. When two-year college enrollment is compared to four-year college enrollment, it appears that too many Black students enroll in two-year colleges. For example, Blacks in 1976 accounted for 8.5% of four-year college enrollment and only 8% in 1984, but, according to Graham, 42% of all Black college students attended two-year colleges. Though a few of these students may go on to a four-year college, most are in deadend programs, which do not prepare students to study for a baccalaureate degree.

Some writers feel that **"block granting programs"**, transferring programs from the federal control to state control affected Black participation in college. When the programs were block granted they lost their national focus. Many of the funding appropriation were cut for programs which directly supported elementary and secondary schooling for the under-represented. Such cuts in funding affected the many services rendered on behalf of minorities and were followed by a drop in the number of graduating high school

students entering colleges, Arbeiter (1987), Braddock (1981). Thus it is obvious when programs that support higher education opportunities for Blacks are cut, fewer Blacks will be available for the field of education.

Role Models

According to Middleton and et al. (1988), it is possible with the dwindling minority teacher representation that a minority student could complete the K-12 school experience and never meet a minority teacher. This in my view, is not good for a Black student's school experience. Many Black students may have low aspirations for school work because they can not see themselves in a tangible manner in the worthy professions, which includes teaching. Graham (1987) stated that there is justifiable concern that minority students would benefit more directly from a teacher role model when the teacher is a member of the students' own minority group.

Blacks must be seen by Black students or all students as intelligent, capable worthy, and contributing citizens in our schools, in our communities, in our cities, and in the U.S. Blacks who are seen by Black students in this way become role models for these students. Waters (1989) reported that these models are doubly important for Black children, since black teachers and administrators are the "significant others" -- persons who act as appropriate role models and are capable of enhancing the self-concept of the young Blacks. Waters (1989) also reported in a survey of Black administrators she has reviewed that 70 of these respondents felt children performed better academically in black schools with

Black teachers. Yet, these findings are being reported when black students are in need of the greatest academic support and Black teachers are vanishing as role models in our public schools.

PASSING THE PPST AND NTE DISCOURAGE BLACK STUDENTS FROM TEACHER EDUCATION

The PPST and the NTE became reform practices of 80's implemented supposedly to improve the quality of teachers in the classrooms. The Pre-professional Skills Test (PPST) is a test used by many teacher education colleges to determine admittance to study in the field of education. The National Teacher Examination (NTE) is a test used by many states to determine a student's eligibility to teach after completing a baccalaureate teacher education program. It appears that these practices in our teacher education colleges have become acceptable ways to reform with little or no concern for equity. These are "gatekeeping" practices.

During the 1980's several states reported high failure rates for Black candidates on the NTE. For instance, Dupre (1986) reported that in Florida 80 to 85 percent of all those who took the test passed, but the passing rate for Black candidates was only 35 to 40 percent.

Some studies have focused on entry level basic competencies to study teacher education. Gifford (1985) in a study of 6,644 minority candidates in California in 1985, who took the basic skills competency test given to prospective teacher education students,

3,854 (58 percent) failed. It is not a secret why Blacks or minorities are not prepared adequately for basic skill competency test used to determine entry into teacher education programs. We all know, it is because many minority or Black students receive a very poor academic preparation in elementary, junior high, and high school.

Colleges and universities are not blameless in this problem. These institutions of higher learning prepared the teachers who are failing to equip a significant number of black students with the basic skill competencies to enter into teacher education. It is also perceivable that we have trained and/or training teachers who do not have the skill capacity to teach students from inhibiting social environments.

Since we have implemented "gatekeeping" practices at the entry and exit level in teacher training programs to assure quality in a classroom teacher and the basic skill competencies of a significant number of black or minority student needs are not met, the focus perhaps for quality in the classroom should shift to include other more compassionate teacher characteristics beyond objective test performance. Waters (1989) reported in an article written by Post and Woessner that other teacher characteristics beyond objective test performance have been ignored in a rush of testing. These characteristics are humaneness, inventiveness, energy, perseverance, self-confidence, the ability to work well with people, and a sense of humor. Quality in the classrooms in the absence of equity in the classroom cannot lead to excellence in the classroom.

INEFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT TECHNIQUES

Since Black teachers are becoming more and more extinct each year it is obvious that what is being done is ineffective. Ineffective recruitment techniques are effecting Black enrollment in post-secondary education. Wiley (1991) reported that according to the American Council on Education (ACE), between 1987 and 1988, the total number of 18 to 24 year old African Americans enrolled in post-secondary education dropped from 823,000 to 752,000. It was also reported that during the same period the nation's 117 historically and predominantly Black institutions, where a fifth of African American students are enrolled, experienced a 10 percent increase in enrollment. Thus if it is possible to enroll or attract more Black in historically and predominantly Black colleges and universities, it is possible to enroll more Black students in teacher education. However, as Waters (1989) noted that active recruitment efforts are necessary in order to attract Blacks to teaching. An active recruitment effort to attract Blacks to teaching must be carried out in both predominantly Black and white colleges and universities.

There are several strategies reported to have an impact on attracting Blacks to teaching. Many of these strategies seem to take pages out of the past. They are as follows: (1) future teachers clubs; (2) alumni contact; (3) colleges engage in high school and junior high visitation, using present education students, bring high school counselors to campus and the media.

LOW ENTRY LEVEL SALARY

Some writers have indicated that low entry level salaries are keeping a significant number of minorities and others from the teaching field. Hawley (1986) reported that low salaries relative to industry and other occupations. It appears too that many Black students have been told other professional fields offer better pay, more opportunity for career advancement and higher social status. Waters (1989) reported that this is true for women and Blacks because previously teaching was often the only career that welcomed them.

Blacks might have given up on teaching as far back as the early 1970's. During this period, there was an oversupply of teachers. This is also the period when desegregating our public schools peaked, which might have developed poor working conditions for some Black teachers. Prospective teacher education students may have observed these conditions and decided that teaching is not for them. The crux of the matter seems to be that many able Blacks look more broadly at employment and no longer feel constrained to seek teaching jobs, Graham (1987).

STRATEGIC PLAN

I. Community Level Collaboration (Church, Community, College or University, and Public Schools)

It is likely that any strategy to increase the number of Blacks in teacher education without involving the church, community organizations, elementary and secondary schools will fizzle out long before the job is complete. Colleges and

universities must also understand that it takes time and commitment to change attitudes. Henniger (1989) stated that because of the time commitment necessary to change attitudes and be truly successful in recruiting minority students into teacher education, we run the risk of having interest and enthusiasm wane long before the task is complete. According to Middleton, Mason and et al. (1988), colleges of education wishing to be successful in their minority recruitment efforts must seek students several years before they are ready seriously to consider higher education and a career in teaching, or the battle is lost. For these reasons, colleges and universities' teacher education officials, in implementing Level I of this plan, are required to organize, plan, collaborate, bring about awareness, emphasize opportunities in education to predominately Black church education groups, predominately Black social groups, YMCA and YWCA, predominately Black recreation groups, predominately Black elementary and secondary school.

II. College and University Level

The second level of the plan is implemented at the college or university. It is at this level that teacher education faculty must really play a significant part with awareness training and helping to develop the various academic support systems. It is also at this level where we will have to dig deep within our hearts for real commitment and support for this plan.

We must keep in mind the decline of Blacks in teacher education is a real problem. This problem is not just going to go away. It will take all the force and

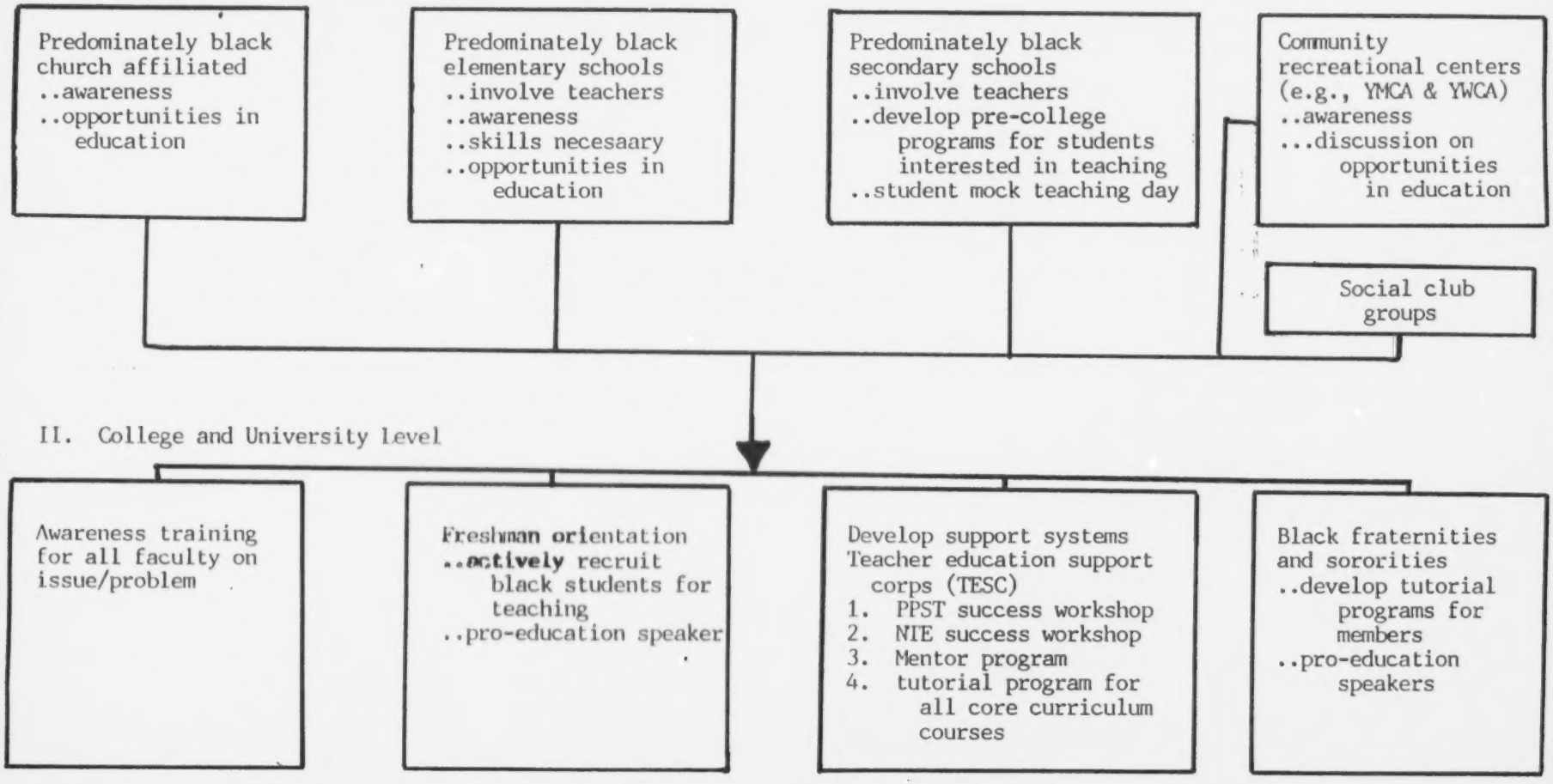
leverage that can be applied to the problem from all of us. Thus, if we really believe in educational opportunity and equity for all children, we want children/students to see themselves in ethnicity in all of the professions -- including teaching.

Another reason the college or university level of this plan is so critical because it addresses a central problem of Blacks exiting American public schools. As Graham (1987) stated that the central problem is that Blacks in the U.S. are not getting as good an education as white are and the education that whites are getting is not good enough. Therefore, teacher education colleges and universities must develop academic support systems for Black students interested in teaching to overcome the impediments of PPST, NTE, and a weak or deficient public school experience.

To address the problem of a declining enrollment of Blacks in teacher education, implementation strategies have been developed at two levels for College and University leadership. These strategies to increase the Black enrollment in teacher education are as diagramed on the following page.

IMPLEMENTATIONS STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF BLACKS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

I. Community Level Collaboration
(church, community, college, university and public school)



II. College and University Level

Awareness training for all faculty on issue/problem
Freshman orientation
..actively recruit black students for teaching
..pro-education speaker
Develop support systems
Teacher education support corps (TESC)
1. PPST success workshop
2. NTE success workshop
3. Mentor program
4. tutorial program for all core curriculum courses
Black fraternities and sororities
..develop tutorial programs for members
..pro-education speakers

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